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AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

1. (Original) A gatekeeper connected to an H323 network, comprising:
a first message receiving section which receives a gatekeeper discovery message from an end point;
a transport data transmitting section; and
a control section which determines whether said gatekeeper has the lightest load among a plurality of gatekeepers including said gatekeeper, and controls said transport data transmitting section to transmit transport data to said end point in response to the gatekeeper discovery message, when it is determined that said gatekeeper has the lightest load.
2. (Original) The gatekeeper according to claim 1, wherein said control section controls said transport data transmitting section not to transmit transport data in response to the gatekeeper discovery message, when it is determined that said gatekeeper does not have the lightest load.
3. (Original) The gatekeeper according to claim 1, wherein said control section comprises:
a storage section which stores a load state list indicative of existence of any of said plurality of gatekeepers having lighter loads than said gatekeeper; and
a first control section which refers to said load state list to determine whether said gatekeeper has the lightest load among said plurality of gatekeepers including said gatekeeper, and controls said transport data transmitting section to transmit transport data to said end point in response to the gatekeeper discovery message, when it is determined that said gatekeeper has the lightest load.
4. (Currently amended) The gatekeeper according to claim 3, wherein said control section further comprises:

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a load state notice message receiving section which receives a load state notice message from another gatekeeper ~~one~~ of said plurality of gatekeepers as a notice transmitting gatekeeper, said load state notice message including a load of said notice transmitting gatekeeper;

a calculating section which calculates a load of said gatekeeper as a self-load; and

a second control section which extracts the load of said notice transmitting gatekeeper from said load state notice message, and compares the extracted load and the self-load, and writes an identifier of said notice transmitting gatekeeper at least into said load state list, when the extracted load is lighter than the self-load.

5. (Currently amended) The gatekeeper according to claim 4, wherein said control section further comprises:

a load state request message transmitting section, and

wherein said second control section controls said load state request message transmitting section to transmit a load state request message with an identifier of said gatekeeper and said self-load to other gatekeepers ~~each~~ of said plurality of gatekeepers, and

~~wherein each of said other plurality of gatekeepers selectively reply by transmitting~~
~~replies~~ said load state notice message to said gatekeeper based on a load of ~~each of said other~~
~~plurality of gatekeepers~~.

6. (Currently amended) The gatekeeper according to claim 3, wherein said control section further comprises:

a load state request message receiving section which receives said load state request message with an identifier of said other ~~each of said plurality of~~ gatekeepers and the load of said other gatekeepers ~~each gatekeeper~~; and

a load state notice message transmitting section, and

wherein said second control section extracts the load of said other gatekeepers ~~each~~

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gatekeeper from said load state request message, and compares the extracted load and the load of said gatekeeper as a self-load, and controls said load state notice message transmitting section to transmit a load state notice message with the self-load and said identifier of said gatekeeper to said other gatekeepers ~~each gatekeeper~~, when the extracted load is lighter than the self-load.

7. (Original) The gatekeeper according to claim 6, wherein said second control section discards said load state request message, when the extracted load is not lighter than the self-load.

8. (Currently amended) A load distributing method in a communication system which comprises a network; an end point operatively connected to said network; and a plurality of gatekeepers including first and second gatekeepers, said method comprising ~~the steps of~~:

- (a) receiving a gatekeeper discovery message from said end point in said first gatekeeper;
- (b) referring to a load state list which indicates identifiers of ones having lighter loads, of said plurality of gatekeepers, in said first gatekeeper to determine whether said first gatekeeper has the lightest load among said plurality of gatekeepers; and
- (c) transmitting transport data to said end point in response to said gatekeeper discovery message in said first gatekeeper, when it is determined that said first gatekeeper has the lightest load.

9. (Currently amended) The load distributing method according to claim 8, further comprising ~~the step of~~:

- (d) ignoring said gatekeeper discovery message, when it is determined that said first gatekeeper does not have the lightest load.

10. (Currently amended) The load distributing method according to claim 8, further comprising ~~the steps of~~:

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calculating a load of said first gatekeeper as a first load;
receiving a load state notice message including a load of said second gatekeeper as a second load from said second gatekeeper;
extracting said second load from said load state notice message;
comparing said first load and said second load; and
writing an identifier of said second gatekeeper into said load state list, when said second load is lighter than said first load.

11. (Currently amended) The load distributing method according to claim 10, further comprising ~~the step of~~:

transmitting a load state request message with an identifier of said first gatekeeper and said first load to said second gatekeeper.

12. (Currently amended) The load distributing method according to claim 10, further comprising ~~the steps of~~:

receiving said load state request message with an identifier of said second gatekeeper and said second load;

extracting said second load from said load state request message;

comparing the extracted second load and said first load; and

transmitting a load state notice message with said first load and said identifier of said first gatekeeper to said second gatekeeper, when the extracted second load is lighter than said first load.

13. (Currently amended) The load distributing method according to claim 12, further comprising ~~the step of~~:

discarding said load state request message, when the extracted second load is not lighter

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than said first load.

14. (New) The gatekeeper according to claim 1, wherein a load distribution is carried out to equalize a load autonomously between gatekeepers in said plurality of gatekeepers.
15. (New) The gatekeeper according to claim 1, wherein said load comprises a ratio of a number of actual registrations to a maximum number of registrations which can be registered by said gatekeeper.
16. (New) The gatekeeper according to claim 5, wherein said second control section controls said load state request message transmitting section to periodically transmit said load state request message.
17. (New) The gatekeeper according to claim 1, wherein said control section controls said transport data transmitting section to transmit transport data to said end point in response to the gatekeeper discovery message only when it is determined that said gatekeeper has the lightest load.
18. (New) The load distributing method according to claim 8, wherein said first gatekeeper is independent of said second gatekeeper and shares information with said second gatekeeper.
19. (New) The load distributing method according to claim 8, wherein said first and second gatekeepers autonomously determine which of said first and second gatekeepers has a lightest load.
20. (New) A packet network, comprising:

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a plurality of gatekeepers, a gatekeeper in said plurality of gatekeepers comprising:
a first message receiving section which receives a gatekeeper discovery message
from an end point;
a transport data transmitting section; and
a control section which:
determines whether said gatekeeper has the lightest load among said
plurality of gatekeepers; and
controls said transport data transmitting section to transmit transport data
to said end point in response to the gatekeeper discovery message, when it is determined that said
gatekeeper has the lightest load.